

Message on the Observance of Cinco de Mayo, 1999

May 4, 1999

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Cinco de Mayo.

It was 137 years ago today that General Ignacio Zaragoza Seguin led an outnumbered and ill-equipped Mexican militia into battle. With brave hearts, they successfully defended their young nation and set a powerful example of hope and determination for freedom-loving citizens around the world.

Well over a century has passed since this battle, but we can still learn much from the Mexican patriots who fought at Puebla. Their story reminds us to cherish our own independence and to honor those who struggled and sacrificed to attain it. It encourages us to stand up against injustice and to uphold our ideals. Finally, it shows us that brave men and women can overcome great odds when they are united in principle and purpose.

As we mark this special holiday, we also celebrate the enduring friendship between the United States and Mexico and the rich cultural heritage that Mexican Americans have brought to our society. As we stand at the threshold of the 21st century, let us vow to work together to forge a future of peace and prosperity for our hemisphere and the world.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes to all for a memorable celebration.

Bill Clinton

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Released U.S. Army Infantrymen at Ramstein Air Base, Germany

May 5, 1999

Captured Serbian Soldiers

Q. Mr. President, would you favor releasing the Yugoslav soldiers, now that the U.S. soldiers have been released?

The President. I think Secretary Cohen answered this earlier today, but several days ago I raised this issue with our national security people, asking them if they would look at it and make recommendations, and I expect to get it in a couple days, and right now

I'm just glad they're home, or they're halfway home, anyway—a couple days they'll be home.

What I think all Americans want for these fine soldiers is what we also want for the over one million people of Kosovo. We want them to go home, too.

And their families—I want to tell you I had occasion to talk with their families on a couple of occasions, and they were concerned, loving, and they were vigorous advocates for their loved ones. And I was very proud of the way they conducted themselves during this incredibly difficult time for them as well. And I want to thank them for the loyalty they had for their children, husbands, nephews, brothers and for the love they have for their country. I was also very moved by them.

Release of Captured U.S. Army Infantrymen

Q. Why do you think Milosevic let them go, sir?

The President. I think he had a number of motives. The important thing is that he did let them go. They were in a peacekeeping mission in Macedonia; they had nothing whatever to do with this. They never should have been taken in the first place. I appreciate what they were doing in Macedonia and their service to our country, and I'm glad they're free.

NOTE: The exchange began at 5:53 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Proclamation 7194—Mother's Day 1999

May 5, 1999

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

There is nothing more precious than the bond between a mother and her child. With unconditional love and infinite patience, our mothers nurture us throughout our lives,

helping us to meet life's challenges and achieve our dreams. Mothers—whether biological or adoptive, foster or stepmothers—are the cornerstones of our families, and our families are the foundation of our Nation. Mothers are the bridges that link America's best promise to its brightest reality.

The role of women has changed dramatically in the last half-century, bringing exciting new opportunities as well as fresh challenges. Today, our mothers can be mayors and managers, heads of households and homemakers—yet they still make us the center of their lives and the focus of their love. Regardless of whether they work inside or outside the home, we still turn to our mothers when we need reassurance, advice, or comfort. Devotion and love, loyalty and selflessness—these are the traits that define motherhood.

For 85 years, we have reserved the second Sunday in May as a special day to honor our mothers for their strength, nobility, and generosity. In so many ways, we owe our successes—and those of our Nation—to the loving influence of our mothers. Although we can never repay them for their gift of life and love, we can honor them in person or cherish their beloved memory. The Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 8, 1914 (38 Stat. 770), has designated the second Sunday in May of each year as "Mother's Day" and requested the President to call for its appropriate observance.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 9, 1999, as Mother's Day. I urge all Americans to express their love and appreciation for their mothers on this day and every day and to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 10, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 11.

Proclamation 7193—National Day of Prayer, 1999

May 5, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

From our earliest days, whether in times of joy or of challenge, Americans have raised their hearts and voices in prayer. On the Great Plains, American Indians prayed for peace and for blessings upon their children and their friends. The Pilgrims prayed from the moment they first set foot on this continent. Our Nation's founders prayed as they forged a democracy based on freedom and respect for human rights. Our military leaders and the millions of men and women who have served in our Armed Forces have prayed in the midst of every conflict in which our Nation has fought. And so it continues to this day, as Americans of every race, background, and creed pray in churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and their own homes for guidance, wisdom, and courage in confronting the challenges before us.

We can pray openly thanks to the religious freedom guaranteed for us by the First Amendment to the Constitution. That freedom and the diversity of faiths it has fostered are among America's most important achievements. They have made our Nation a beacon for generations of people from around the world who have traveled here seeking to worship according to their conscience without fear of coercion or constraint.

On this National Day of Prayer, observed so soon after the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado, and the tornadoes that devastated communities in Kansas, Texas, and Oklahoma, we are more keenly aware than ever of the power and solace we find in prayer. Throughout the days that have followed the deaths of and injury to so many of our fellow citizens, Americans have united in prayer for those who died or were harmed, for the comfort and peace of their families, for the wisdom to heal our society, and for the strength to overcome such tragedies. For as Martin Luther King, Jr., so eloquently said, "When our days become dreary with low-hovering